

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 220650Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7304
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 5046

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDS AMEMB KABUL AS INFO ADDEE)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: NIAZI ELECTED ACTING CHAIRMAN OF PPP

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 5018, B) ISLAMABAD 3673, C) ISLAMABAD A-57,
D) ISLAMABAD A-58

1. SUMMARY: MAULANA KAUSER NIAZI, LEADER OF THE "MODERATE"
WING OF THE PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP), WAS ELECTED
ACTING CHAIRMAN OF THE PPP 19 MAY AT A SPECIAL SESSION
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OF THE PARTY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. NIZAI'S ASCENSION
FOLLOWS A LONG SERIES OF POLITICAL GYRATIONS AND WILL
BE SEEN AS A VICTORY FOR THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION'S
(MLA) STRATEGY FOR PLITTING THE PPP. END SUMMARY.

2. MAULANA KAUSER NIAZI, LEADER OF THE "MODERATE" WING
OF THE PPP AND A FORMER FEDERAL MINISTER IN THE BHUTTO

GOVERNMENT, WAS "ELECTED" ACTING CHAIRMAN OF THE PPP 19 MAY BY THE PARTY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. NIAZI'S TAKE-OVER LIFTS THE TITLE, IF NOT YET THE MANTLE OF PARTY POWER, FROM BEGUM BHUTTO, WHO REMAINS UNDER HOUSE ARREST.

3. NIAZI'S ELECTION VICTORY FOLLOWS A WELL-MANAGED SERIES OF EVENTS WHICH BEGAN WITH NIAZI'S "EXPULSION" FROM THE PPP AT A RUMP SESSION OF THE PARTY EXECUTIVE ON THE EVE OF THE 1 MARCH BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE FORMALITIES APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SET INTO HIGH GEAR ON 18 MAY WHEN NIAZI MET WITH GOP'S ELCTION CELL, AND SUBSEQUENTLY HAD TEA WITH CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA) RINGENERAL ZIA. INITIAL REPORTS INDICATED THAT NIAZI WOULD BE ACCOMPANIED TO THE MEETINGS ONLY BY A SMALL CONTINGENT OF PPP-ITES, BUT, PERHAPS IN ANTICIPATION OF AN AGREEMENT, THERE WAS A LAST MINUTE STAMPEDE FOR PLACES AT THE MEETING, AND THE NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS ULTIMATELY SWELLED TO ABOUT TWENTY.

4. LITTLE HARD NEWS EMERGED FROM THE MEETINGS, BUT ON 18 MAY PPP SECRETARY KAMAL AZFAR SAID THAT THE MLA HAD GRANTED SPECIAL PERMISSION TO THE PPP TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING, IN CONTRAVENTION OF THE GENERAL BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY. AZFAR SAID THAT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMITTEE FELT THAT NIAZI SHOULD BE ELECTED ACTING CHAIRMAN, SINCE BEGUM BHUTTO REMAINED FROZEN OUT OF THE POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

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BALL GAME, AND SINCE MANY OTHER PPP LEADERS WERE NOW BEING DISQUALIFIED (REFAIR C).

5. NIAZI WAS ELECTED 19 MAY, AND ANNOUNCED A "NEW STRUCTURE" FOR THE PPP. UNDER HIS BANNER THE PARTY'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS NOW HELD BY: MAULANA KAUSER NIAZI: ACTING CHAIRMAN; KAMAL AZFAR: SECRETARY-GENERAL; AND NASRULLAH KHAN KHATTAK: SENIOR VICE-CHAIRMAN. IN A CRUELLY IRONIC GESTURE, NIAZI'S ELECTION WAS ANNOUNCED IN THE PRESS ON 20 MAY, THE VERY DAY FORMER PM BHUTTO'S APPBLTTM HIS MURDER CONVICTION BEGAN IN THE SUPREME COURT (REFTEL A).

6. IN ONE OF HIS FIRST OFFICIAL ACTS, NIAZI MET 20 MAY WITH PIR PAGARO, PRESIDENT OF THE PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE (PML). THEY REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED "COOPERATION" BETWEEN THEIR PARTIES. PAGARO, NOW THE HEAD OF A REUNIFIED PML, WITH THE QAYYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE BACK IN THE FOLD (REFAIR D), HAS HINTED THAT HE MIGHT CONSIDER JOINING A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ALONG WITH A NIAZI-LED PPP.

7. COMMENT: NIAZI'S ASCENSION TO PPP LEADERSHIP IS THE CULMINATION OF A LONG STRUGGLE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE

PARTY. THE RUMORED SPLIT OF THE PPP, EITHER BY THE MAULANA'S EXILE OR BY HIS TAKEOVER, HAS BEEN A STANDARD REFRAIN IN PAKISTAN SINCE AUGUST, 1977. NIAZI HAS ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT HE REPRESENTS THE "REAL PPP," AS OPPOSED TO THE BHUTTOS, AND HE GAMBLERED THAT, AS THE BHUTTO FAMILY AND THEIR RADICAL FOLLOWERS WERE TIED UP IN THE COURTS AND KEPT UNDER DETENTION BY THE MLA, THE PARTY WOULD TURN HIS DIRECTION. IT IS ALSO APPARENT THAT NIAZI HAD WORKED OUT SOME MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE MLA, POSSIBLY IN EXCHANGE FOR A NO CHARGES/NO DISQUALIFICATION PLEDGE; HE MAY HAVE ACTED IN GENERAL ZIA'S BEHALF IN FOMENTING A PPP SPLIT.

7. NIAZI NOW MUST CONSOLIDATE HIS HOLD ON THE PARTY; IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR HOW MUCH OF THE OLD PPP HE WILL ATTRACT.
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HE MAY ALSO HAVE A PRICE TO PAY TO THE CMLA -- LIFTING OF THE POLITICS BAN AND A HIGH VISIBILITY TEA WITH THE CHIEF MAY NOT BE CHEAP -- AS ZIA HAS PROMISED AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT THIS COMING WEEK.
HUMMEL

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